

SNAPSHOT Strategic Communications Promote Connections

A training for local government on strategic communications encourages transparency and an open dialogue with constituents.



USAID/Libya

USAID/OTI supported a two-day training course for members of the Benghazi Local Council on communications in the government, constitution, and media.

"No matter how painful, we must study what Gaddafi did in the field of communications. We all detest this man but we need to understand how he used communications so effectively against us."

-- Benghazi Local Council member,
and strategic communications
training attendee

November 2012 – Benghazi is the birthplace of Libya's revolution, but it's also home to the new government's growing pains. The Benghazi Local Council (BLC) is popularly elected but has been slow to deliver services, risking a crisis in confidence that could ultimately undermine the momentum of the country's political transition. To counter this trend, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) recently supported an effort to provide local government officials in Benghazi with tools to communicate and connect with communities.

To assist the new government's transparency and responsiveness, USAID/OTI supported a two-day training course that included lobbying, research, and strategic communications skills. Twenty members of the BLC and staff from the Prime Minister's communications office attended the training. The local and national officials engaged in vigorous debates on the constitution and the internal communication structure of the government. The workshop was part of a cluster of trainings on strategic communication for government, civil society, and media designed to promote dialogue and build public trust.

Four decades of oppressive rule resulted in distrust of the government and a deep sense of marginalization among some communities in Libya. The country's revolution also created high expectations for rapid change. The process of reviving trust and rebuilding local government institutions will be a slow process requiring continuous dialogue among a broad cross-section of key stakeholders. The Benghazi workshop directly responds to this, providing strategic communications skills to create a conducive environment for responsive, representative governance in Libya.

Having received the training, members of the BLC expressed a greater understanding of the people's needs and expectations. "Libyans want to see real change and not just words," said one council member. Since the workshop, the BLC has restructured its strategic method and agenda for all media appearances and public statements made by the council. The Vice-Chairman of the BLC, Saad Al-Saeti said, "The skills we gained from the strategic communication training provided us with practical ways of reaching out to the people that we were previously unaware of." The head of the BLC media committee thanked USAID/OTI on national television for supporting the training, and sent a clear message that the local government is listening to the people, and wants to turn improved communication into lasting change.

Telling Our Story

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